562 shown by most observers as the principal agent of production in the midst of a slavery-free society and, for that reason, as a factor in becoming rich. These are the generally accepted opinions; what are they worth?

562 842 It appears to us that the stress falls primarily on the capacity for fecundity of the woman who is acquired legally. The wife allows the man to manifest himself as a begetter (ésa); she assures his posterity, which for a Fang is the prime property. Through her he not only proves himself fully male but he obtains a true social promotion, acquiring influence which grows in proportion to the growth of his family group, participating fully in the pre-eminent social stratum, that of the generation of "fathers." In a conquering society, as Fang society was up until recent times, a man's influence was determined more by the number of the warriors attached to him (4) (the wife properly giving him male

4. Let us quote an unequivocal proverb: "a relative is a gun."

descendants and relatives by marriage) than by his personal warlike valor. One might say his importance was in proportion to his aggressive and defensive potential.

The man without posterity is a lesser being, an inferior Fang, because he is powerless. It is significant that the word ki means at the same time "strength, virility, and power." This explains [149] the position held by the magic for fecundity, by the "techniques" to check the causes of sterility, and the fact that sterility is the sanction linked to the most serious offenses (especially incest). In a well-known formula, this state of affairs indicates the pre-eminence of the "production of human beings" over the production of means of existence." The chance discovery of a notebook in which a young man of the Oyem region had written down some of his dreams and the rules of conduct he followed has shown us the level of obsession which the pursuit after future descendents may attain.

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We give as an example the most "direct" of these dreams: "I dream that a lady speaks to me in my dream so that my wife may have a child. I should roast a banana, go near a river, cut

562 this banana, and give half to my wife, after we have both drunk
842 some water. Then I should go and embrace my wife. Then I
159 should dip her (?) in water saying: who is this woman from whom you come?" Another text, given as a "dream," hardly deserves this name, or is only part of a richer dream (and it is still very revealing). It consists of a recipe for fecundity: "I dream that the devil recommends three herbs for a sterile woman, that she may bear a child...." The meaning is clear, all the more as various precepts collected under the title The Individual Will confirm it clearly. "I shall find means not to live any longer without leaving a child; what pursuits will permit a man not to die without leaving a child?; to choose oneself 'what is needed' to marry a woman who bears children (1) ...." One could call

1. Cahier de Daniel Ngema Ondo
[Notebook of Daniel Ngéma Ondo].

it a regular "complex of the man without posterity." The search for numerous future descendants is still the most important undertaking. If the reasons for "power" just referred to have for the moment disappeared, others have been substituted or have appeared: the fear of breaking a line of descent, of being only a "deceased one" and not an ancestor (mvam) revered by his posterity, the fear of abandoned old age, and now the desire to enrich the family grouping, which is an economic unit, by having at one's disposal the greatest possible number of active elements. Elsewhere we have pointed out that the possession of a large grouping is a guarantee of greater liberty because of the increased influence it entails.

562 Besides being the instrument for reproduction — and hence subject [150] as soon as she is married to the most complete control — the woman is also the instrument of production. While the man builds the huts, clears the plantations, and (in the past) was essentially in charge of "defending the women and children," (1)

1. In 1890, A. Fourneau observed in the Estuary region "long files of women loaded like mules" who